

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 MCT-01 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 /088 W
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R 011248Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1312
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMCONSUL MADRAS
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 6841

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TA
D: PINT, IN
SUBJECT: CHARAN SINGH RESIGNS FROM PARTY POSITIONS

REF: A. NEW DELHI 5883 B. NEW DELHI 6465

1. SUMMARY: IN AN ABRUPT MOVE CHARACTERISTIC OF HIS
IMPULSIVE STYLE, HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH PLUNGED
THE JANATA PARTY INTO DISARRAY APRIL 29 BY RESIGNING
FROM THE PARTY'S TWO PRIME COMMITTEES, THE NATIONAL
EXECUTIVE AND THE PARLIAMENTARY BOARD. THE OSTENSIBLE
REASON WAS THE GROWING REBELLION BY DISSIDENT JANATA
LEGISLATORS IN THE STATE OF HARYANA, BUT A MORE
FUNDAMENTAL CAUSE MAY HAVE BEEN HIS CONCERN AT THE
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POTENTIAL EROSION OF HIS STRENGTH IN THE NORTHERN
"HINDI BELT" STATES. RECONCILIATION EFFORTS ARE UNDER-
WAY, BUT HOWEVER THE CURRENT IMBROGLIO IS PATCHED UP,
THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES AMONG THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP
WILL CONTINUE TO PLAGUE THE PARTY AND HAMPER ITS FUNCTION-
ING. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CHRONIC FACTIONALISM WITHIN THE JANATA PARTY INTENSIFIED OVER THE WEEKEND WHEN GOI HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION FROM THE PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY BOARD AND NATIONAL EXECUTIVE, THE JANATA'S TWO MOST IMPORTANT DECISION-MAKING BODIES (SEE NEW DELHI

A-72). HOWEVER, CHARAN SINGH, WHO IS RECUPERATING IN A DELHI HOSPITAL FOLLOWING HEART TROUBLE (REFTEL B), DID NOT RESIGN FROM THE HOME MINISTERSHIP. THE TEXT OF THE LETTER HAS NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC, BUT ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS CHARAN SINGH CHARGED THE JANATA LEADERSHIP WITH ENCOURAGING DISSENSION IN PARTY RANKS IN HARYANA, U.P. AND OTHER STATES. SPECIFICALLY, HE REPORTEDLY CLAIMED THAT THE PARTY HIGH COMMAND WAS SEEKING TO UNDERMINE THE JANATA GOVERNMENTS IN HARYANA AND U.P. BY INSTIGATING CAMPAIGNS OF VILIFICATIONS AGAINST CHIEF MINISTERS DEVI LAL AND PM NARESH YADADV. THE HOME MINISTER ALSO CLAIMED THAT WHEN HE RAISED THESE MATTERS WITH THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP, NEITHER THE PRIME MINISTER NOR PARTY PRESIDENT CHANDRA SHEKHAR HAD TAKEN ACTION. DEFENDING HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER DEVI LAL AS AN "HONEST MAN AND A MAN OF MORALS," CHARAN SINGH ALLEGED THAT DEVI LAL'S OPPONENTS WERE EVEN COLLABORATING WITH BANSI LAL (FORMER CONGRESS CHIEF MINISTER OF HARYANA AND A PRIME ARCHITECT OF MRS. GANDHI'S EMERGENCY) TO BRING DOWN THE DEVI LAL MINISTRY.
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3. CHARAN SINGH'S OUTBURST WAS EVIDENTLY SPARKED BY THE GROWING CRISIS IN DEVI LAL'S GOVERNMENT IN HARYANA. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, A GROWING NUMBER OF JANATA MLA'S HAVE BEEN STEPPING UP THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE IS AN INCOMPETENT ADMINISTRATOR AND INDUGLES IN FAVORITISM TOWARDS HIS FRIENDS AND RELATIVES. THESE DISSIDENTS ALSO CHARGE THAT DEVI LAL HAS EMPLOYED THE SAME "HIGH-HANDED AND AUTHORITARIAN" STYLE OF OPERATION WHICH CHARACTERIZED BANSI LAL'S REGIME. ALTHOUGH THE CHIEF OF MINISTER WON A VOICE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE AMONG THE 76 JANATA MLA'S EARLIER IN APRIL, THE DISSIDENTS WERE NOT DETERRED AND CONTINUED THEIR DEMANDS THAT HE RESIGN. AT THE DIRECTION OF CHANDRA SHEKHAR AND PRIME MINISTER DESAI, ALL JANATA MLA'S FROM HARYANA WERE SUMMONED TO DELHI APRIL 29 FOR ANOTHER VOTE OF CONFIDENCE TO BE HELD AT THE PM'S RESIDENCE. THE DISSIDENTS CLAIMED THAT THEY HAD THE SUPPORT OF 30 MLA'S EXACTLY HALF THE STRENGTH OF THE JANATA LEGISLATURE.

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PARTY. HOWEVER, BOTH SIDES HAVE REMAINED DEADLOCKED
AND DEVEL LAL AND HIS SUPPORTERS REFUSED TO ATTEND THE
APRIL 29-30 METINGS AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE.
MEDIATION EFFORTS TO RECONCILE THE PRO AND ANTI-
DEVI LAL FACTIONS, LAUNCHED BY GOI STEEL AND MINES
MINISTER BIJU PATANIK, THUS FAR HAVE BEEN REJECTED BY
BOTH SIDES.

4. CHARAN SIGNH'S ABRUPT RESIGNATION FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY
BOARD AND NATIONAL EXECUTIVE TRANSFORMED WHAT WAS ESSENTIALLY
A TYPICAL JANATA IMBROGLIO AT THE STATE LEVEL INTO A FULL-
FLEDGED OPEN CONFRONTATION AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE
NATIONAL JANATA LEADERSHIP. THE HOME MINISTER EVIDENTLY
BELIEVED THAT THE FATE OF DEVI LAL, A FELLOW JAT AND HIS
HANDPICKED NOMINEE FOR THE HARYANA CHIEF MINISTERSHIP,
WOULD ALSO AFFECT HIS OWN STANDING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL.
HE MAY HAVE FEARED THAT IF THE HARYANA DISSIDENTS SUCCEEDED,
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THERE WOULD BE REPERCUSSIONS IN BIHAR AND U.P. THE CHIEF
MINISTERS OF THESE TWO STATES, ALSO HAND-PICKED NOMINEES

OF CHARAN SINGH, ARE FACING SIMILAR REBELLIONS FROM WITHIN THEIR OWN RANKS. ACCORDING TO SOME OBSERVERS HERE, CHARAN SIGNH WAS PARTICULARLY INCENSED BY THE BELIEF THAT PRIME MINISTER DESIA AND JANATA PRESIDENT CHANDRA SHEKHAR WERE ENCOURAGING THE RESISTANCE TO DEVI LAL AS PART OF THEIR CAMPAIGN TO CUT THE HOME MINISTER DOWN TO SIZE. THE STRAINS BETWEEN CHARAN SINGH AND CHANDRA SHEKHAR HAVE BEEN EVIDENT FOR MONTHS, BUT IT IS ONLY IN RECENT WEEKS THAT THE CONFLICT BEWTWEEN THE HOME MINISTER AND THE PRIME MINISTER HAS REACHED MAJOR PROPORTIONS (SEE REFTTEL A). THE THIRD MEMBER OF JANATA'S TRIUMVIRATE, DEFENSE MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAM, HAS REMAINED IN THE BACKGROUND OF THE CURRENT DISPUTE.

5. THE HARYANA DISPUTE HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY STALEMATED AND DEVI LAL AND THE JANATA MLA'S HAVE RETURNED TO CHANDIGARH, THE STATE CAPITAL. BEFORE THEY LEFT DELHI, THE PM CHIDED THE DISSIDENTS AT AN APRIL 30 MEETING AT HIS HOUSE AND INDICATED THAT THE ISSUE WILL BE REFERRED TO THE PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY BOARD FOR RESOLUTION. AT THE SAMETIME, JANATA LEADERS HAVE BEGUN EFFORTS TO PERSUADE CHARAN SINGH TO WITHDRAW HIS RESIGNATION LETTER. THE PRIME MINISTER CALLED ON CHARAN SINGH AT HIS HOSPITAL BED APRIL 30, BUT LATER TOLD REPORTERS THAT THE RESIGNATION ISSUE HAD NOT ARISEN IN THEIR TALKS.

6. COMMENT: AFTER A DECENT INTERVAL TO ALLOW COOLING OFF BY BOOTH SIDES, THERE MAY WELL BE A BURYING OF THE HATCHET EXERCISE AKIN TO THE "DINNER DIPLOMACY" OF THE "BIG FIVE" WHICH OCCURRED IN EARLY APRIL. NONETHELESS, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE WEEKEND EVENTS HAVE ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED PUBLICLY THE ACUTE INTERNAL DIVISIONS WHICH AFFLICT THE JANATA AT ITS HIGHEST LEVELS. THE HARYANA CRISIS IN ITSELF WAS SYMPTOMATIC OF THE FACTION-RIDDEN JANATA GOVERNMENTS IN THE STATES. WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT IN THIS INSTANCE, HOWEVER, IS THAT CHARAN SINGH CHOSE TO PROJECT IT ONTO THE NATIOAL SCENE. HIS ABRUPT RESIGNATION FROM THE TWO PARTY POSTS CAUGHT MOST PEOPLE BY SURPRISE, BUT THIS OUTBURST IS CHARACTERISTIC OF THE HOME MINISTER'S IMPULSIVE AND IMPETUOUS STYLE. A SIMPLE JAT FARMER, CHARAN SINGH LACKS SUBTLETY OF APPROACH AND ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN THE PAST HE HAS THREATENED PRECIPITATE ACTION TO HAVE HIS WAY. (THE PRESS REPORTS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT HE THREATENED TO QUIT AS HOME MINISTER IN EARLY APRIL BECAUSE OF CONTINUING CRITICISM FROM JANATA MP'S THAT HE IS ANTI-HARIJAN.) THE TIMING OF HIS LATEST OUTBURST MAY BE RELATED TO HIS RECENT HEART AILMENT AND HIS GROWING

IMPATIENCE AT BEING RELEGATED TO THE NUMBER TWO POSITION
IN THE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER THE CURRENT DISPUTE IS EVENTUALLY
PATCHED UP, THE BASIC DIFFERENCES AMONG JANATA'S SENIOR
PARTNERS WILL CONTINUE TO UNDERLIE AND HAMPER ITS FUNCTIONING.
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